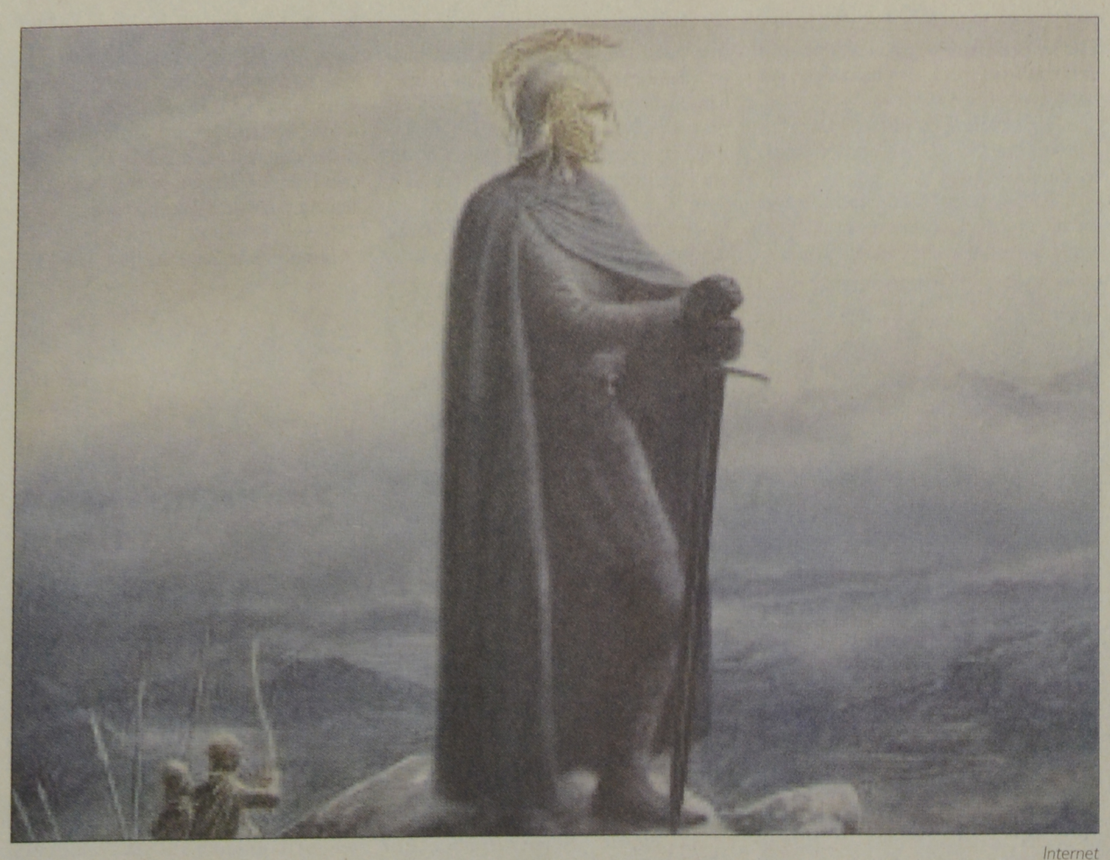
Tolkien resurrection delights nerds



Internet

by Jim London

Just when you thought he was dead, J.R.R. Tolkien is about to release a new novel. The Children of Hurin, set in Middle Earth many years before the events of The Lord of the Rings, is scheduled for simultaneous release in North America and the UK on April 27th.

How has this come to pass, you wonder? Some say that Tolkien's still dead and that his son Christopher has spent 20 years editing and re-editing various manuscripts into one continuous narrative about the human hero Hurin and his heirs.

Unbelievable new evidence, however, suggests that there may be more to it than that. Reports from the United Kingdom indicate that an elite coven of level-60 World of Warcraft mages, master Dungeons & Dragons adventurers, and other social pariahs gathered a fortnight ago at Tolkien's grave in Wolvercote Cemetery, Oxford and raised the professor from the dead.

Says one eyewitness, who wished to remain anonymous, "It was amazing. I've never seen so many 20-sided dice in one place before. And Everyone was wearing the coolest costumes. It was even better than camping out in line for tickets to Star Wars Episode III!"

Many fans reportedly brought editions of Tolkien's books to be signed, but after more than 30 years in the ground, the author was feeling a bit grouchy and restless, and was eager to get on with this latest project.

The strict timetable seems to have resulted in something of a rush job: Tolkien enthusiasts will recognize chunks of the novel from previously published works such as The Silmarillion, Unfinished Tales and The Lays of Beleriand. Nevertheless, they have been assembled together for the first time in novel form for The Children of Hurin.

If you're a Tolkien newb -- having enjoyed, perhaps, The Lord of the Rings books or the recent film trilogy by director Peter Jackson -- this might be one to skip. You'll find no lackadaisical hobbits or charismatic wizards in this tale. Recalling, as scholars have noted, the Finnish Kalevala epic, the story of Hurin and his family is a grim one, filled with betrayal, incest and suicide -- standard fare for the Norse myths to which Tolkien devoted much of his professional scholarship.

Cursed by the Morgoth (LoTR baddie Sauron's boss and one seriously mean guy) to know the tragic fates of his children Turin and Nienor, Hurin eventually commits suicide by casting himself into the sea -- but not before his kids off themselves first. Deluded by the witchery of a dragon, Nienor and Turin are married and incestuously conceive a child. Upon discovering what they've done, both characters end their lives, Turin falling upon his magic talking sword, which exclaims:

"Yea, I will drink thy blood gladly... I will slay thee swiftly."

Pithy stuff.

For true fans, or those of you who are just really into the idea of death and sexual deviance conveyed in the Queen's English, the hardcover edition of The Children of Hurin (which also features artwork by acclaimed Tolkien illustrator Alan Lee) will cost about $30. A special deluxe edition is planned for simultaneous release; it includes a slip cover, is bound with superior materials, and will cost around $80.

You can also participate in the launch "party" if you're especially wild: the three days of online party mayhem begin April 15th at irc.tolkiengateway.net. Aside from all the Elvish poetry and virtual debauchery, there will be games, competitions and giveaways.

No matter what happens, though, make sure to keep your magic sword in its sheath.

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"100 human-made chemicals before it is even born." There are alternatives to these chemicals, but, unfortunately, no company is yet obligated to use them.

Midway through the event, Toby Couture from the New Brunswick Conservation Council took the floor. Addressing a quote from one of his professors, he offered, "Climate change is a single problem; the solving of which is going to be required of the solving of all of our problems."

Couture touched on some of the solutions that are being put into practice on a national and an international level. He also explained that anything other than renewable energies will not take us to higher standards of living in the future, and that we should focus largely on recycling and reusing the resources that are at hand today.

The event was a hit. Wonderfully content and full of pizza, I headed home. Naturally, I decided to walk.

